



ORA

Office of Ratepayer Advocates
California Public Utilities Commission

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Dana S. Appling, Director

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September 2, 2005

The Honorable Martha Escutia
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 580 (Escutia) - Support

Dear Senator Escutia:

The Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA) supports your SB 580, which would expand the Low-Income Oversight Board (LIOB) advisory duties to include low-income ratepayer water utility issues and would also streamline the California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) program application process.

As you know, the LIOB advises the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on low-income energy assistance programs such as CARE and the low-income energy efficiency (LIEE) program. The CARE program provides a rate discount to eligible low-income ratepayers that have trouble paying their energy bills and the LIEE program provides eligible ratepayers with energy efficiency and conservation services. This bill would ensure that all eligible low-income ratepayers are enrolled in the CARE program via the automatic enrollment process established in Commission Decision 02-07-033.

ORA supports this bill because it would ensure access to rate assistance under CARE for all eligible low-income energy ratepayers through interagency cooperation and the Commission regulated utilities providing the gas and electric service. Moreover, this bill would authorize the LIOB to advise the Commission on options to provide similar rate relief to eligible low-income water utility ratepayers.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to call Matthew Marcus, ORA's Legislative Director, at (916) 327-3455 or me at (415) 703-2544.

Sincerely,

Dana S. Appling, Director
Office of Ratepayer Advocates